

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 19, 2014

Carmen Fariña  
Chancellor, New York City Department of Education  
Tweed Courthouse  
52 Chambers Street  
New York, NY 10007

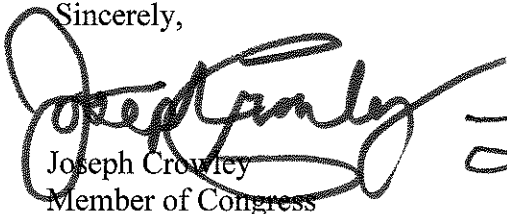
Dear Chancellor Fariña,

We understand that you are considering the designation of Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha and Lunar New Year as New York City public school holidays. As members of Congress representing constituents in New York City, we support a potential move to recognize these holidays and urge you to include the festival of Diwali on the list of new public school holidays.

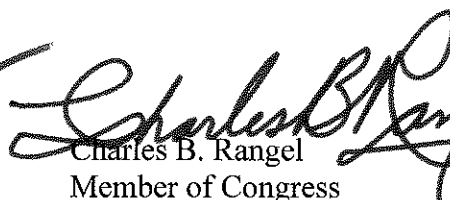
For nearly a decade, Diwali has been gaining increased recognition throughout the United States. In fact, this year the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian-Americans celebrated the first-ever Congressional Diwali, and the White House has recognized the festival under successive administrations. In New York City, Diwali is celebrated by countless residents, including Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. The majority of New York's Indian-Americans, which include not only those of direct South Asian origin but also those of Indian-Caribbean heritage, consider Diwali amongst their most significant holidays. Further, New York City is home to several dozen temples and gurdwaras, some of which are among the largest in our nation. The numerous Diwali celebrations in the city, such as the popular South Street Seaport event, is a testament to the recognition and popularity of Diwali, attracting thousands from in and around the area.

We appreciate your consideration of school holidays that reflect our diverse city and ensure that students aren't forced to choose between attending school and observing important holidays with their families. This is all the more important since members of the communities that celebrate Diwali not only contribute in countless ways to our great city, but their children also compose a sizeable and rapidly growing portion of our schools' students. We hope to see them recognized by the designation of Diwali as a public school holiday.

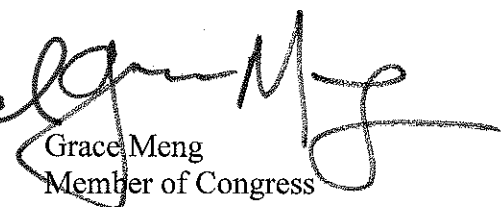
Sincerely,



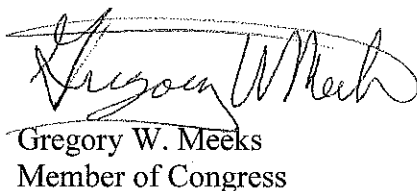
Joseph Crowley  
Member of Congress



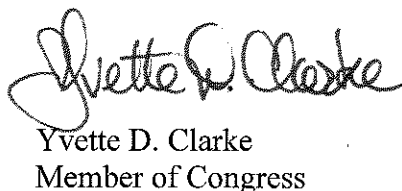
Charles B. Rangel  
Member of Congress



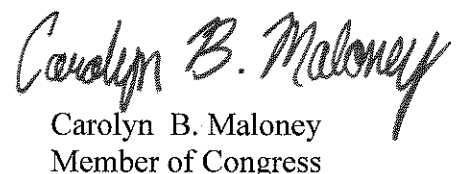
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress